



From aspiration to innovation: Anziplast launches its own R&D talks

20 April 2021, 02:00

Bas Rottier

Gunthram Cornelis

In order to strengthen its ambitions for a *Factory of the Future*, injection moulding company Anziplast recently started organising a monthly online **R&D talk**. Under the motto *Stay Connected*, 15 employees and an external guest exchange new solutions, knowledge and ideas. Sirris joined the discussion during the first session and seamlessly integrated the R&D talk with the Crisis Code Cracker intake interview. We do not want to withhold this inspiring story about innovation from the bottom up!

About Anziplast

[Anziplast](#) in Izegem is a supplier of customer-specific injection moulding products. The company produces technical parts for the automotive sector, but also plastic products for specific or everyday applications.

"What I find so fascinating about plastics? The enormous versatility," says **Dirk Vanherck, sales and project manager at Anziplast and the inspirer of the R&D Talks**. "The combination of

design and material always leads to a product with unique properties. But the mystery is also intriguing: the same design made in a different material, or at a different temperature, can either fail or succeed." With more than 25 years of practical experience under his belt, we take Dirk at his word.

Tell us, why this new concept?

"We have translated the 7 transformations of the Factory of the Future into 10 projects. One project is called 'stay connected', of which the R&D-talk is one practical implementation. With our R&D-talks, we want to create movement in the field of innovation and stay connected at the same time. Every month, we light a new fire. We then see if anyone can take the flame to his or her department, or to the entire organisation. This also sends a signal to people who have a new idea or a question, that they can turn to someone. In this way, we want to create a culture in which solidarity and knowledge sharing are central.

How does it work in practice?

"Every last Thursday of the month, 15 colleagues from our R&D department, process engineers, technical service, quality service, etc. gather. At the moment, of course, this takes place online via Teams. We also invite an external partner each time, with whom we share knowledge and solutions. Our guest may be an R&D centre, but also a supplier of materials or machines. We give them the opportunity to explain what their organisation can do for us. In this way, we gain new insights every time. It was a good idea to let Sirris participate in the first session."

Why do you think that?

"The Crisis Code Cracker **intake interview** fitted perfectly with our R&D talk initiative. Moreover, the Sirris experts immediately turned out to be a listening ear. Their starting point: tell us what is going on and we will think about how we can help. That is a completely different approach than: "Look, we do this and we have these projects running". The first contact with Bas was also smooth and natural. During the meeting, he mainly asked questions and listened carefully to the input of the participants."

What topics were covered?

"Most of the themes revolved around our greatest challenge: the transformation to a Factory of the Future. Think about **digitalisation, production logistics, sustainability or know-how management**. Topics that fit in well with our ten current innovation projects. We also thought about some technical challenges, or the development of a new non-stick coating for our moulds. It was surprising to see what eventually came out of it."

What is the next step?

"The ideas and starting points that came up in the R&D talk were compiled by Sirris in its **advisory report**, based on the Code Cracker. It discusses no less than **15 relevant topics**. All topics that could be interesting for our company, that are in line with our challenges and that Sirris could later explore in more detail in a topic scan. Afterwards there was a **debriefing**, in which a number of questions were discussed and extra information was sent."

Would you recommend the Crisis Code Cracker to other entrepreneurs?

"Definitely. The intake interview and the report are guaranteed to reveal things that you hadn't thought of yourself, or that go beyond what you initially had in mind. As a company, you may have a clear plan in mind, but there may also be another way. Sirris, with all their expertise and know-how, took on the role of moderator in our exploration. And they do it in a sublime way. Sirris also triggers things that we did not immediately think of, which is very inspiring. This is how a fruitful interaction developed right from the start. Moreover, as a West Flemish company, we did not incur any costs or administration for the cooperation, thanks to the intervention of POM West-Vlaanderen.



[Read more about the Crisis Code Cracker](#)

Companies in West Flanders take part in the [Crisis Code Cracker programme](#) free of charge thanks to the POM West Flanders recovery plan. The current reality underlines the importance of increasing digitalisation and automation of business activities and the need for digital skills among employees. That is why the province, together with its partners, has developed an offer aimed at the digital and sustainable transformation of industrial SMEs and their employees. With a total package of scans, audits, implementation processes, workshops, inspiring webinars and investments in digital technologies, they are increasing the resilience of West Flanders companies. #samenondernemen, #morewestvlaanderen.



Authors



Bas Rottier



Gunthram Cornelis